



Synod Report



News of the Synod of the Southwest, Presbyterian Church USA

If there is one thing that all components have in common throughout the Synod of the Southwest, it is change.

From pastoral transitions in many local parishes to changes in leadership and organization at the presbytery level, to new ways of doing things at institutions within the Synod, change is in the air.

Presbyteries moving to new leadership

The most dramatic change within the four presbyteries of the Synod is taking place in Santa Fe and Sierra Blanca in New Mexico.

After a two-year process the two presbyteries have voted to share staff and a national search is now under way for a Regional Presbyter/Stated Clerk who will serve both presbyteries.

Later, an Associate Stated Clerk/Office manager will be hired, and an Administrative Assistant.

The presbyteries expect to call special meetings this fall to act upon a nomination of the Search Committee for the lead staff position. The person will choose in which presbytery to have his/her office. At least one of the remaining staff persons will have an office in the other presbytery.

• After several years of study, Presbytery de Cristo is near being able to call a new Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk.

• In Grand Canyon Presbytery, 10-year executive the Rev. Ken Moe plans to retire the first of July. A committee is at work seeking an interim executive for the presbytery.

• And all four presbyteries are living into the new reality of the drying up of Mission Partnership Funds from the General Assembly Council.

Since the Board of National Mis-

Change is in the air all over the Synod

sions went out of existence in 1973 and turned over to the presbyteries what had been National Mission projects and programs, the Synod has been highly dependent upon the continuing financial support of the denomination not only to maintain presbytery staff but also to maintain the many Native American and Hispanic congregations scattered throughout the Synod.

A decision has been made by the General Assembly Council that there will be no more Mission Partnership Funds beginning in 2013.

How to maintain a viable and vibrant Presbyterian presence in the two-state area with the loss of these funds is the challenge that lies ahead.

Although these funds have been less each year recently, the Synod will still receive \$659,254 in 2009.

Ghost Ranch seeking to be independent

A potential change of a different kind is in the offing for Ghost Ranch, the 23,000-acre national conference center in Northern New Mexico. There is a second center in Santa Fe.

If the Board of the ranch has its way, it would become an independent corporation linked to the PC(USA). A five-member study group of the General Assembly Council (GAC) is examining the proposal and is to make a recommendation to the GAC's September meeting.

Two GAC members from the Synod are members of the study group – Conrad Rocha of Albuquerque and Mary Lynn Walters of Phoenix.

Primary reasons for this proposal from the Ranch Governing Board are:

• the ability to choose people for its governing board who have business ex-

pertise and knowledge of Ghost Ranch and its surrounding culture;

- efficiencies in accounting;
- freedom to establish its own

personnel policies in accord with its own needs rather than having to follow the denomination's policies;

- freedom from the requirement to use the PC(USA)) Board of Pensions medical and pension plan;
- the ability to make decisions at the local level rather than going through the GAC.

A five-year covenant between the GAC and Ghost Ranch signed in 2001 has expired. The covenant required the GAC to financially support Ghost Ranch, but because of budget cuts, that support has been reduced to almost nothing.

This has resulted in \$800,000 in lost direct support since 2004.

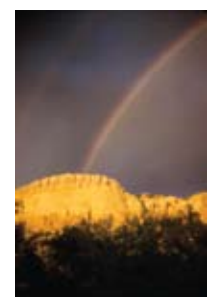
–From Presbyterian News Service

Cook finding its way into unknown future

Cook Native American Ministries, as it is now called, is still finding its way into the future while maintaining many of its historic programs.

The school closed its campus a year ago and

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Plan in place for Santa Fe and Sierra Blanca Presbyteries to share staff

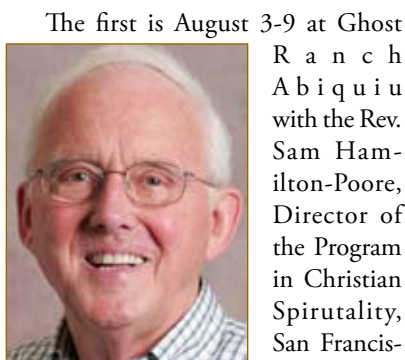


Larry Norris

Synod preaching seminars set for summer, fall

The event will serve to integrate sermon planning with spiritual formation and includes both a scholarly and prayerful approach to the gospel lectionary

Pastors in the Synod have two excellent opportunities for continuing education this summer and fall – with top leaders at extremely reasonable costs.



Herman Waetjen

The first is August 3-9 at Ghost Ranch Abiquiu with the Rev. Sam Hamilton-Poore, Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality, San Francisco Seminary, and the Rev. D. Herman C. Waetjen, Emeritus Professor of the New Testament, San Francisco Seminary.

Their topic is “Before the Cradle and Beyond the Cross: Preaching from Advent to Easter 2010.”

The event will serve to integrate sermon planning with spiritual formation and include both a scholarly and prayerful approach to the gospel



Hamilton-Poore

Moderator Reyes-Chow spoke at Sun City Faith Church on June 7

Moderator Reyes-Chow coming to Sun City

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly, was the guest preacher at Faith Presbyterian Church in Sun City, June 7.



He also participated in the meeting of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon on the day before at Desert Palms Church.

He is characterized as an energetic new church development pastor in San Francisco and leader in the “emergent church” movement.

lectionary texts from Advent 2009 to Easter 2010.

And the cost? Just \$100 which includes, registration, Board and Room, transportation – and great fellowship and networking with other pastors in the Synod.

The time to register is now at www.synodsw.org.

It is possible for the Synod to be able to do this for its pastors through a grant from the General Assembly Council. This three-year program began last year with three events and will continue in 2010. Registration is limited to 60.

Rigby in October

October 5-7 will bring the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Rigby, Austin Theological Seminary, to Ghost Ranch Santa Fe.

An extremely popular and dynamic speaker, she will focus on the theme,

“Preaching That Spans the Gap Between Church and Society.”

On the faculty at Austin since



Cynthia Rigby

1995, she was referred to by the *Dallas Morning News* as one of about 12 contemporary theologians who can “span the gap between church and society.”

By giving attention to theology, politics, and sociology, these theologians were said to “shape the world, not just follow in its wake.”

Cost is \$100 and registration is open now through www.synodsw.org.

Synod is encouraging churches to use and to distribute “Just Coffee/Café Justo”

“Just coffee, please.”

But for churches and members in the Synod of the Southwest, it won’t be just coffee at coffee fellowships and around the breakfast table, it will be caffeine with a conscience – Just Coffee.

At the March meeting of the Synod of the Southwest, commissioners voted to encourage churches and members in the Synod to support “Just Coffee/Café Justo,” a cooperative in Southern Mexico that is developing roasters and a distribution system for coffee grown by local growers.

The intention of Just Coffee/Café Justo is to secure employment and a livelihood for Mexican farmers who would otherwise be struggling for survival. What has emerged has been employment for forty families in Salvador Urbina who are supporting themselves with a living wage that allows them to remain in their home village rather than leave for the U. S. in a desperate and dangerous scramble to survive.

Luis “Pelayo” Diaz Perez said while holding his two year old son: “Café

Justo means that my son will have his dad at home and that he will never have to migrate.”

Two other communities in Mexico have now organized Just Coffee cooperative.



Just Coffee/Café Justo began though the ministry of Frontera de Cristo, one of the PC(USA) Border Ministries

in Douglas, AZ, and Agua Prieta in Mexico about three years ago. The Rev. Mark Adams, a member of Presbytery de Cristo and Mission Co-workers, has served as the U.S. Coordinator of this program.

Through a one-year-loan from the Synod of the Southwest, the book, *Just Coffee: Caffeine with a Conscience* by Mark Adams and Tommy Bassett III has been published. “It tells the story of this economic miracle in the making. It’s a parable of hope trumping desperation, viable living wages replacing debilitating poverty, and warm humor emerging from utter despair,” as the preface of the book states.

More information is available on the web site: www.justcoffee.org.

Small rural church with a big heart is responding to community needs around it

“We serve about 100 households per month, but it is growing a little every month”

With some help from friends, the Datil Community Presbyterian Church, one of the smallest in Santa Fe Presbytery (13 members at the end of 2008), is reaching out to the community around it in a big-hearted way.

Under the leadership of member Anne Schwebke, the church's Datil Food Pantry is responding to the hunger needs in the area.

When Associate Pastor Karen Hill gave a sermon at Albuquerque First using as a text the story out of Acts 4 about how the early church shared its money and possessions and using the Datil church as a example of a similar thing happening in our area, Pastor Paul Debenport challenged people to come forward to share their joys and put some money in a joy jar.

Some \$370 was donated. It was sent to Datil.

Three in Grand Canyon Presbytery are “Iron Women”



Three persons from Grand Canyon Presbytery participated in the Resolution Run in January at Papago Park and won medals in their respective age groups. They are the Rev. Shelly Moe, Shirley Randolph of Mountain View church, and Meg Stevenson of Mountain View church. They are also Iron Women, having run in the Aflac Iron Woman race in December. The T-shirts they are holding are distinctive in that the animals become color images when exposed to the light.



In responding to the gift, Anne Schwebke said, “Thanks from the bottom of our hearts....We are still growing. We serve about 100 households per month, but it is growing a little every month. We have a volunteer list of almost 50 people.”

The pantry is sponsoring a Farmer's Flea Market every Saturday through September to raise money, not only for the pantry but for other local organizations.

The unexpected response from the community is that for years there were from seven to 12 in worship. Attendance has now doubled. “People like to be connected to a church that's making a difference,” says Executive Presbytery Jim Collie.

The Rev. Randy Pence is the part-time pastor at Datil and has been driving there each Sunday from Albuquerque for 18 years. He's the longest serving pastor in the Presbytery.

In support of the pantry, the Presbytery has also made two distributions from its hunger fund.

Datil (Spanish for “date”) is located in huge Catron Country that has a population of about 3,400. The number of elk exceeds the number of people.

Send items of interest to the whole Synod to Ray Kersting, editor of *Synod Report*, at SFRKerst@grappawireless.com. Next issue will in July.

Valley Church hosts June celebration of Ken Moe's service

After 10 years of service as Executive Presbyterian of Grand Canyon Presbytery, the Rev. Ken Moe is retiring July 1. In celebration of his service, a retirement dinner was hosted by Valley Church in the Phoenix area on June 5.



Moe's retirement was noted at the March meeting of the Synod of the Southwest with an appropriate cake which he is seen cutting.

A graduate of Arizona State University in 1965, he came to his present position from Associate Executive Presbyterian of Carlisle Presbytery.

Ministry was his third career. His first was as an Army officer, serving as an Intelligence Research Officer in Phoenix and Honolulu and a POW Interrogation Officer in Viet Nam.

He left the active duty as a captain in Military Intelligence branch.

Ken then worked for Travelers Insurance Company in several capacities, mostly as an investigator dealing with disability claims, claimant and provider fraud, accidental death investigations, and mysterious disappearance.

Baptized at Phoenix First, he later was a member of Phoenix Memorial Presbyterian Church in 1977 when he became a candidate for ministry of word and sacrament under care of Grand Canyon Presbytery

After graduating from Pittsburgh Seminary in 1980, he was ordained and served as pastor of Faith church, Kittanning, PA; assistant pastor at Market Square Church, Harrisburg, Pa; interim pastor at Saint Andrews Church, Lebanon, Pa, and interim associate pastor at Silver Spring Church, Mechanicsburg Pa.

Ken was called as Executive Presbyterian of Grand Canyon in 1999. He plans to continue to live in Phoenix with his wife, the Rev. Shelly Moe.

Ministry in the Presbyterian Church was Ken Moe's third career



Menaul holds Mission Week

The Menaul School community held a mission week in April that saw students doing a multitude of important jobs locally and in Oklahoma.

Sixth through eighth graders remained on campus painting some of the school fence, they went to the Bosque Nature Center and trimmed and planted trees, they visited a nursing home to visit and sing with residents and they decorated and made Easter cards for the elderly.

Ninth graders went to Magdalena and worked on the Presbyterian church there as well as working on homes of some of the church members. Church members joined in the work.

Tenth graders went to Ghost Ranch Abiquiu and worked with the

maintenance department there, picking up trash, moving rocks and doing general clean up.

Juniors and seniors traveled to Hugo, Oklahoma, and worked on the campus of Goodland Academy. It is a Presbyterian related school that was historically a boarding school for Choctaws and is now a boy's school.

Students planted trees, trimmed bushes, planted grass, built brick liners around trees and cleaned their historic cemetery.

The group also visited Austin College, the Presbyterian related school in Texas, the University of Oklahoma, and spent time at the Oklahoma City bombing memorial.

Staying the course

(continued from front page)

planned to sell the land in Tempe. Because of the economic downturn potential developers backed off.

Cook is continuing "to work with a developer in achieving a joint venture that will lead to all parties accomplishing their goals," according to Larry Norris, president.

In the meantime Cook continues to off a variety of ministries such as Winter and Summer term, Certified Lay Pastor Training, and a Community Leadership Program.

Cook continues to operate out of the administration building on campus and host most events at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale.

Nicole Stansifer to be Young Adult Volunteer

Nicole Stansifer, a member at Albuquerque Covenant, has been selected to serve as an International Young Adult Volunteer in Kenya during the 2009-2010 cycle by the General Assembly Council. Covenant recently held a talent show to raise money for her support.



For further news and information on the Synod of the Southwest, go to www.synodsw.org

Synod Mission study trip to China, Border issues seminar set

In addition to the preaching seminars discussed on page 2, the Synod has two other major events on the calendar in the next year.

Already, 20 persons of diverse ages and backgrounds are scheduled to participate in the Synod of the Southwest Global Mission Experience, October 12-28, to China.

Participants will have an opportunity to learn about the variety of ministries in China under the China Christian Council/National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement as well as coming to understand the current political and social realities in China.

Cities to be visited include Shanghai, Naging, Xi'an, Kunming, and Beijing.

Complete information and registration material are on www.synodsw.org.

Next spring, April 15-17, a bi-national seminar, "Crossing Borders – Encountering God," will be held in Phoenix to discuss border and immigration issues.

Sponsored by the Synod of the Southwest, Synod of the Sun, the General Assembly Office for Multicultural Ministries, Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de Mexico, and Frontera de Cristo, the event will bring together leaders and persons from diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

Full information is can be found at www.synodsw.org.

Synod Report is a periodic online newsletter of the Synod of the Southwest intended to develop a sense of community throughout the four presbyteries by reporting on events of the presbyteries and churches within the Synod, as well as news of the larger Church.

Reproduction and distribution to leaders in each of the congregations is not only permitted by highly encouraged.

Ray Kersting, editor and design

Elder Conrad Rocha, Santa Presbytery, Moderator

The Rev. Carrol Blevins, Sierra Blanca Presbytery, Moderator-Elect

The Rev. Jan DeVries, Stated Clerk/Executive

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Membership statistics across the Synod show decline for the year 2008

Although the two-state area within the Synod of the Southwest continues to grow in population, membership in churches in the

tery with 15,133 members. Presbytery de Cristo has 7,630, Santa Fe has 6,800, and Sierra Blanca, 2,032.

In all four presbyteries the most members were lost through removal from the rolls. Losses through transfer of membership was the smallest category.

smaller

Although all four presbyteries report racial ethnic diversity in membership, by far the largest block of members are reported to be "white."

Total income to the churches across the Synod totaled \$47,392,810.

Sessions in the four presbyteries designated almost \$2 million to the unified mission of the church. This is mission carried out by the General Assembly, Synod, and Presbytery.

Age group statistics were not available from Grand Canyon Presbytery, but in the other three presbyteries, by far the largest age group reported was those over 65.

The smallest age group reported was those 25 and under.



four presbyteries of the Synod dropped during 2008.

The four presbyteries showed a combined loss of 1,332 members in their churches. Total Presbyterian membership across the Synod stands at 31,595.

Grand Canyon had a net loss of 511; de Cristo, 312; Santa Fe, 408, and Sierra Blanca, 101.

Leading the way in terms of total membership is Grand Canyon Presby-

Presbyteries vote to defeat Amendment B

Late in April it was reported that a majority of the presbyteries had voted to defeat the so-called Amendment B.

The amendment would have replaced the current Presbyterian Church (USA) constitutional requirement that church officers live in "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness.

Synod of the Southwest presbyteries Santa Fe, de Cristo, and Grand Canyon voted in favor, the Presbytery of Sierra Blanca voted against.

This was the fourth time in the past 12 years similar amendments regarding the controversial provision have been defeated.

As of late April, 27 of the 127 presbyteries that voted "no" in 2001-2002, voted in favor this time. Two presbyteries, San Francisco and Sierra Blanca,

that voted in favor the last time, voted against this year.

After it was determined that a majority of the 173 presbyteries had voted against the change, General Assembly Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow, General Assembly Council Executive Director, and Gradye Parsons, General Assembly Stated Clerk issued a letter to the church. It said in part:

"We have witnessed and heard many different stories as the amendment on G-6.0106b was debated. In this and other deliberations, we as a church have learned better how to talk about difficult issues in a spirit of trust and faith.

"We may not always agree, but have never forgotten that those with whom we disagree are still our brothers and sisters, as together we strive to reflect our common calling..."

Grand Canyon Presbytery has 15,133 members. Presbytery de Cristo has 7,630, Santa Fe has 6,800, and Sierra Blanca, 2,032

Presbyteries Santa Fe, de Cristo and Grand Canyon voted in favor, the Presbytery of Sierra Blanca voted against

Presbyteries launching racial ethnic fellowships

In keeping with the current denominational emphasis to develop racial ethnic congregations, Presbyteries de Cristo and Santa Fe are in the process of launching two new fellowships.

For Presbytery de Cristo, it's the Middle Eastern Presbyterian Fellowship in the Tucson area.

For Santa Fe Presbytery it's an Hispanic fellowship on Albuquerque's Southwest Mesa. This is an ecumenical effort with the Rocky Mountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Presbytery of Santa Fe and the United Church of Christ.

Leading the effort in Tucson is the Rev. George Bitar and his wife, Mary. After an exceptionally long wait for, Bitar has just recently received his R-1 visa and is now able to move ahead in the effort.

A growing fellowship of 50-75 Arabic speaking Christians are currently gathering weekly at Northminster Presbyterian Church in Tucson for worship and Bible study.

Funding for the effort is coming from members of the fellowship as well

Missionary in Thailand visits Synod this fall

Carol Fujii, mission co-worker in Thailand is scheduled to visit in the Synod of the Southwest this fall from September 25 to October 18.

She and her husband, the Rev. Leith



Carol Fujii and the Rev. Leith Fujii

as a grant of \$15 thousand from Presbytery de Cristo, \$30 thousand from the Synod of the Southwest, and an expected grant of \$10 thousand from the General Assembly Council Office of Middle Eastern Congregational Enhancement.

The Rev. Jon Ashley, moderator, Presbytery de Cristo Ministry for Witness and Outreach, says "The Synod of the Southwest's contribution of \$15 thousand last year was instrumental in getting this ministry started."

In Santa Fe Presbytery, reaching the point of actually beginning work in the fast growing area of Albuquerque comes at the end of a long period of 10 years of off-and-on conversation between the Lutherans and Presbyterians.

In the fall of 2008, Albuquerque Second Church called Guillermo Yela as an intern to work on community en-



Guillermo Yela

Fujii, work at the Bangkok Institute of Theology. He is an instructor in English and evangelism and she serves on the faculty teaching English to the entering class.

Although they spent time together in the Synod two years ago, she will itinerate alone this year while her husband visits different synods.

In addition to her teaching, Carol Provides ministry from home, helps at one of their daughter's international school and volunteers with The Well, an outreach ministry to women in prostitution.

Their work in Thailand is done in partnership with the Church of Christ in Thailand.

Carol's parents live in Los Alamos so she is very familiar with New Mexico.

Schedule of her visits will be communicated as soon as they are all confirmed.



With the successful approval of an R-1 visa for the Rev. George Bitar and his wife, Mary, they are working to develop the Middle Eastern Presbyterian Fellowship in Tucson.

agement. Conversations began again and Yela began actively exploring the possibilities of a Spanish speaking or bi-lingual effort in this area of Albuquerque.

Pending his successful passing of ordination examinations, Yela will be ordained and installed in September as an evangelist/mission developer.

He is actually beginning his work in June.

Funding for this effort in 2009 of what will be at least a three-year effort is coming from the Presbytery of Santa Fe that has gradually been accumulating money for new church development.

Some money has come through the Joining Hearts and Hands campaign and some from gifts from churches in the Presbytery.

Plans call for the establishment of a Steering Committee composed of two persons from each participating church body, the mission developer, and two/three interested persons from the primary service area.

Preaching seminars offered

An opportunity to improve missional preaching is being offered pastors in the five western synods this summer at three different sites.

The one-week seminars are being offered by the Office of Theology and Worship of the General Assembly at no cost to pastors.

Applications and information are available at www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/events/academy.htm.

*Your
Mission
Dollars
at
work*